

Mental Health of Rural Mi'kmaw Youth: Community Based Participatory Research



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Adele Vukic, RN PhD,
Ruth Martin-Misener RN-NP, PhD
David Gregory RN, PhD
Josephine Etowa, RN, PhD

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Purpose of the Presentation

To present findings and implications for practice based on research which set out to:

- *explore understandings of mental health held by rural Mi'kmaw youth*
- *identify actions that promote the mental health of Mi'kmaw youth*

Presentation

- Context
- Methods
- Findings
- Implications for Practice



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Context

Forced Assimilation and Health Disparities (Adelson, 2005; AHF, 2006; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2011; Brant 1993; Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012; Mussell, 2004; RCAP, 1996; RHS (Regional Health Survey), 2002/2003; Tait, 2009; Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012; Walls, Hautula, & Hurley, 2014).

Aboriginal Youth Mental Health (Adelson, 2007; Dell et al. 2011; Gone, 2009; Kirmayer, Tait & Simpson, 2009; McCormick, 2009; Mushquash et al, 2007; PHAC, 2011; RCAP, 1996; Smye & Browne, 2002).

Proxy Indicators (RCAP, 1996; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Kirmayer, 2012. Union of Nova Scotia Indians, 2013)

Methodology

Community Based Participatory Research with a Community Advisory Committee (Castledone, et al. 2007; Etowa, Thomas-Bernard, Ojinsin, & Clow, 2007; Israel et al., 2005; Kemmis, & McTaggart, 2005; Koch, & Kralik, 2006; MacAulay et al. 1999; McNiff, & Whitehead, 2006; Park, 1993).

Critical Indigenous Qualitative Inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Smith 2000; Kovach 2009)

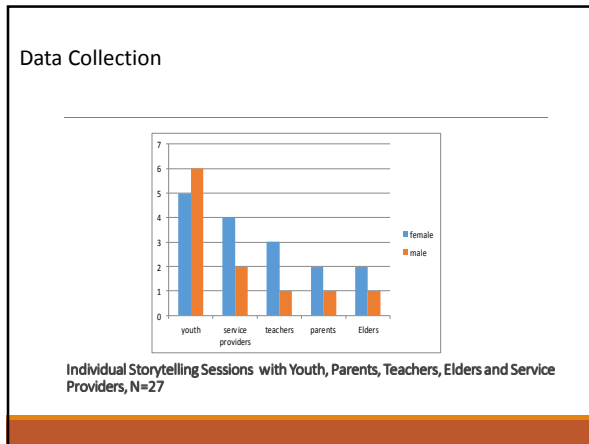
Thematic Analysis in Collaboration with the Community Advisory Committee (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2005)

Indigenous Knowledge

The traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous people is scientific, in the sense that it is empirical, experimental, and systematic.

It differs in from Western science, as traditional ecological knowledge is highly localized and it is social. Its focus is the web of relationships between humans, animals, plants, natural forces, spirits, and the landforms in a particular locality, as opposed to the discovery of universal law.

(Battiste, M . 2000; Kovach 2009
Standfield & Brown, 2013)



Data Collection Continued

Five Talking Circle Sessions, N=26 Youth, 3 Elders

- Talking Circle #1 (5 female youth)
- Talking Circle #2 (3 female and 1 male youth)
- Talking Circle #3 (5 female and 6 male youth)
- Talking Circle #4 (6 female youth)
- Elder Talking Circle (1 female and 2 males)

Community Open Forum

Findings; Youths' Understandings

<p>Living my Life Well, Msit no' kmaq, (all my relations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflecting, knowing more about oneself, taking action • Bad feelings, letting go and moving on • Integrating physical and mental health • Interconnectedness of community, family, friends and peers
<p>Navigating Negotiating and Creating a Sense of Self</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted listener • Supportive unsupportive relations and role models • Community events • Leaving the community • Becoming side-tracked with alcohol and drugs • Youth and suicide

Living My Life Well; Msit no' kmaq, (all my relations)

Self-reflecting, knowing more about oneself, taking action

I am trying to think how to explain it, well you live your life...like whatever you think it's your own doing it's not like anyone did anything to make you think this way, it is your own doing. David

I just changed the way I looked at things and I stopped hanging around people who brought me down, and I just decided that I am going to live for myself and I'll be happy for who I am. And I wouldn't let anybody tell me to change. Jennifer

Like it can be how you were born and your brain and stuff but I think it also has to do with like the choices you make in life. And like if you decide to do bad things then you're obviously going to think that way. Talking Circle #2.

Living My Life Well; Msit no' kmaq

Bad feelings, letting go and moving on

Oh, yeah, there's no denying that you're going to feel bad for a long time about it. But after you move on, like you'll think about it... Like you'll slowly start to forget about it, like you do with anything else in life. But you'll remember at certain times. Jim

Integrating physical and mental health

It is kind of physically because the way you feel, like if you're feeling down and you mentally feel that way, and it makes your body physically feel that way. Because even if you do look happy and you're not, your body doesn't feel happy But I think mental health is spiritually and physically. And it mostly has to do with what's going through your mind. Talking Circle #4

Living My Life Well: Msit No' Kmaq

Interconnectedness of community, family, friends and peers

Like off-reserve, you probably wouldn't know your neighbours. But here, you know everyone. You could go next door and say hi if you wanted to. It's like one big family really. Debbie

Navigating, Negotiating and Creating a Sense of Self

Trusted Listener

Anyone you feel comfortable with. Because if you don't talk about it, eventually it's just going to eat you alive basically and hurt you even more. Jennifer

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Navigating, Negotiating and Creating a Sense of Self

Subtheme: Trusted Listener

There was this one teacher that I would talk to because I've known her for a while and she was really close to my family. And like I would talk to her but I wouldn't talk to the counselor because I hardly knew her. Leah

Subtheme: Supportive Relationships

The youth need the youth to push them, to give them that little push... And then when they say oh, I can do this, then you stay there and you're saying, "Yes, you can." And you continue helping...You support them. You stay with them. Patrick

Navigating, Negotiating and Creating a Sense of Self

Community Events

I like the fact that because we're a community, we all share something and that's our cultural background, so celebrating our culture. (Talking Circle #4)

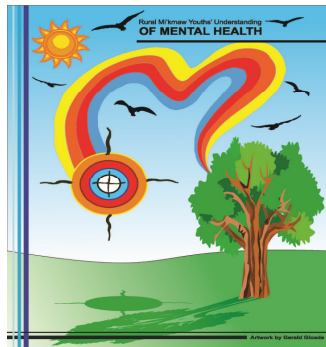
Leaving the Community

Yes. That's why I've been saying I want to get off the reserve for a little bit. I want to live on reserve but I just want to get off and meet people first. Todd



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Youths' Understanding: Living my Life Well; Msit no'kmaq, (all my relations)



Co creation of An Action Plan to Promote Mi'kmaq Youth Mental Health

Actions with Youth

- Enhancing workshops and programs
- Connecting with Elders and Mi'kmaq culture
- Creating a drop in center
- Addressing addictions

Broader Community Action Plan

- Promoting community involvement
- Collaboration amongst existing services
- Supporting parents

Community Health Nursing Practice Implications

Focus on youth involvement; recognize the abilities of youth and the relevance of listening to, and engaging youth in the community regarding the promotion of their mental health (a strength based, relational approach to practice)

Focus on collaboration; promoting, developing and advancing programs that involve community members and resources within the community.

Recruitment and retention of Aboriginal nurses would increase the presence of role models, and legitimization of Aboriginal people who could support Aboriginal youth.

Conclusion

Youths' lives are intrinsically interwoven within the community, rooted in historical, socio-economic and political inequities which cannot be addressed by a bio-medical model alone.

Rural Mi'kmaq youth mental health is understood in relation to how Mi'kmaq youth actively strive to live their life well.

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